



## Heatwaves and their impact on people with alcohol, drug and mental health conditions: A discussion paper on clinical practice considerations

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**Year:** 2011  
**Journal:** Journal of Advanced Nursing. 67 (4): 915-922

### Abstract:

**AIM:** This article discusses the clinical implications of adverse health outcomes derived during heatwaves for people with mental health disorders, substance misuse and those taking prescribed medications such as lithium, various neuroleptic and anticholinergic drugs. **BACKGROUND:** With climate change it is predicted that the incidence of prolonged periods of extreme heat will increase. Specific adverse health outcomes associated with high environmental temperatures include heat stroke and heat exhaustion. Those at increased risk for heat-related mortality are those with chronic health conditions, including those with mental health disorders and substance misuse. **DATA SOURCES:** Sources of evidence included and 'grey' literature published between 1985 and 2010, such as key texts, empirical research, public policies, training manuals and community information sheets on heat waves. **DISCUSSION:** Current clinical practice and clinical impact of heatwaves on those people with comorbidity is explored. This includes the physiological components of heat stress, heat regulation, and the impact of alcohol and other drugs; and, ramifications and professional practice issues for those with mental health conditions and those requiring mental health medications. **IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING:** Client education covering modification of the environment and the use of client heat safety action plans. Secure, accessible stores of prescribed medication are recommended and emergency substance withdrawal kits could be made available. **CONCLUSION:** All nurses have a responsibility to increase the capability and resilience of their clients to manage their chronic health needs during a heatwave. At these times nurses need to give extra monitoring and assistance when clients lack the capacity or resources to protect themselves.

**Source:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2010.05551.x>

### Resource Description

#### Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Temperature

**Temperature:** Extreme Heat

#### Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

# Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

## **Geographic Location:**

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

**Non-United States:** Australasia

## **Health Impact:**

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Injury, Morbidity/Mortality, Other Health Impact

**Other Health Impact:** heat related illness

## **Intervention:**

strategy to prepare for or reduce the impact of climate change on health

A focus of content

## **Medical Community Engagement:**

resource focus on how the medical community discusses or acts to address health impacts of climate change

A focus of content

## **Mitigation/Adaptation:**

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

**Population of Concern:** A focus of content

## **Population of Concern:**

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Children, Elderly

**Other Vulnerable Population:** people with chronic health conditions; people with mental health disorders; people with alcohol dependence; people with drug dependence; people taking prescribed medications such as lithium, various neuroleptic and anticholinergic drugs

## **Resource Type:**

format or standard characteristic of resource

Policy/Opinion, Review

## **Resilience:**

capacity of an individual, community, or institution to dynamically and effectively respond or adapt to shifting climate impact circumstances while continuing to function

A focus of content

## **Timescale:**



time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

## **Vulnerability/Impact Assessment:**

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

A focus of content